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ABSTRACT

What differentiates nonviolent individuals from violent individuals? This paper addresses the question by linking current psychological literature on human values with literature on nonviolence. Recent contributions to values theory have begun to establish a universal structure of human values. The theoretical case is made that nonviolent predispositions are positively related to the value domains of universalism, benevolence, and conformity. Some empirical support for these relationships is provided and recommendations are made for future research on nonviolent personality predispositions. (Contains 20 references.) (DB)

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The Value Structure of Nonviolent Personality Predispositions

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Abstract

Nonviolent strategies have been successfully employed to attain significant political goals. What differentiates nonviolent individuals from individuals who are not? The purpose of this paper is to link the current literature on human values with the literature on nonviolence from a Gandhian perspective. Recent contributions to values theory have begun to establish a universal structure of human values (Schwartz, In press; Schwartz and Bilsky, 1987, 1990). This paper makes the theoretical case that nonviolent predispositions are positively related to the value domains of universalism, benevolence, and conformity. Some empirical support for these relationships is provided and recommendations are made for future research on nonviolent personality predispositions.

The Value Structure of Nonviolent Personality Predispositions

Nonviolent strategies have been successfully employed to attain significant political goals. The extensive activities of Mohandas Gandhi in India and Martin Luther King in the United States are prime examples. What differentiates individuals who engage in nonviolent actions from individuals who do not? While this question has been the focus of numerous discussions, psychological research to date has rarely focused attention on nonviolent predispositions. The purpose of this paper is to link the psychological literature on human values with the literature on nonviolence and to make recommendations for future peace research.

The Nature of Values and Value Theory

Human values are enduring prescriptive or proscriptive beliefs that specific modes of conduct or end-states of existence are preferred to other modes of conduct or end-states (Rokeach, 1973). Individual values have been repeatedly found to be significantly related to and predictive of both political attitudes and behaviors (e.g. Ball-Rokeach, Rokeach, & Grube, 1984; Rokeach, 1973, 1979).

Schwartz and Bilsky (1987, 1990) have built on the work of Rokeach and proposed a theory of a universal psychological content and structure of human values. Their universal structure of values is based on the assumption that values are criteria derived from one or more of three universal requirements characteristic of the human condition -- needs of individuals as

biological organisms, requisites of coordinated social interaction, and survival and welfare needs of groups. Schwartz and Bilskey (1987,1990) have provided considerable cross-national research to validate several facets of their theory over the last few years.

One facet of Schwartz and Bilsky's universal value theory which has considerable potential for peace researchers and psychologists interested in a better understanding of nonviolence involves the structural relations among motivational domains of values. The ten motivational value domains proposed and researched by Schwartz (in press) include power, tradition, hedonism, stimulation, security, conformity, self-direction, benevolence, universalism, and achievement. These motivational domains, their characteristic definitions, and the values which are included in them are presented in Table 1.

The universal value domains have been shown to be useful in consolidating previous peace research related to political activism related to the nuclear issue (Mayton & Furnham, 1991). Following the discussion on the nature of nonviolence in the next section of this paper, the case will be made that these value domains are also valuable in improving our understanding of nonviolent predispositions and behavior.

The Nature of Nonviolence

What is meant by nonviolence when successfully used in the political context by individuals such as Mohandas Gandhi and Martin Luther King to attain significant political goals?

According to the teachings and writings of Gandhi, nonviolence means more than the absence of violence. For Gandhi nonviolent action encompasses a philosophy of life and a general strategy predisposition for conflict resolution (Pelton, 1974). Nakhre (1982) verified that this philosophy was in fact internalized by participants of nonviolent actions in India. Using a series of interviews Nakhre found a clear majority of the nonviolent activists viewed nonviolent action as a creed rather than a political tactic.

The philosophy inherent in the use of nonviolent action as a means of conflict resolution employed by Gandhi seems to have three components (Bose, 1987; Nakhre, 1982). These components are based on the Gandhian concepts of satyagraha, ahimsa, and tapasya.

Satyagraha literally translates to "holding on to the truth" (Nakhre, 1982, p. 2). The process of satyagraha is an active technique of conflict resolution which consists of a search for truth and a struggle for its vindication. Because of the subjective perceptions inherent in both sides of a conflict situation, the truth one discovers is of necessity a relative truth based on the social context of each individual.

Ahimsa literally means noninjury and serves as the means to achieve the goal of satyagraha (Nakhre, 1982). The assumptions and implications of ahimsa have broader ramifications for nonviolent activists in the Gandhian tradition. Ahimsa can be taken to mean active goodwill or love and is predicated upon the

belief in the sacredness of life (Bose, 1987; Pelton, 1974). It is also an action based refusal to do harm or to allow harm or injustice to exist anywhere in the world.

The last principle in Gandhi's system of nonviolent action is tapasya meaning self-suffering (Nakhre, 1982). The importance of self-suffering is based on the realization that the truth of the nonviolent activist is a subjective one. As such it may be further from the "real truth" than the truth of the opponent's values. Therefore, nonviolent activists are more willing to endure suffering themselves than to inflict it upon their adversaries. Voluntary suffering may also appeal to the conscience of one's adversary often eliciting sympathy and further dramatizing the perceived injustice (Pelton, 1974).

The Value Underpinnings of Nonviolent Action

Three of the ten value domains include values which are integral to the Gandhian philosophy of nonviolence. Individuals who embrace the philosophy of life consistent with Gandhian nonviolent action should place higher priorities on the value domains of universalism, benevolence, and conformity.

Schwartz (in press) has defined the universalism domain to reflect the understanding, appreciation, tolerance and protection for the welfare of all people and for nature. Values which comprise the universalism domain include social justice, broadminded, a world at peace, wisdom, unity with nature, protecting the environment, and equality. This universalism domain should reflect the values of nonviolent activists for

multiple reasons. First of all, as explained above, satyagraha involves the discovery of truth and the value of wisdom is a key value of the universalism domain. Secondly, the desire to avoid and alleviate the world of injustice should be tapped by the values of social justice and equality. In addition, the refusal to do harm and to suffer rather than inflict it should be tapped by the value of a world at peace.

The benevolence value domain defined by Schwartz (in press) focuses on the preservation and enhancement of the welfare of people with whom one is in frequent personal contact. This domain includes the values of helpful, forgiving, honest, and loyal. This benevolence value domain should reflect the values of nonviolent activists because of the importance of the values of being helpful and forgiving. The value of helpful is important for nonviolent activists since one goal is to assist the adversary to see the truthful way or way of truth within a conflict situation. Being empathic has been discussed as an important aspect of the philosophy of nonviolence (e.g. Keniston, 1990; Kool and Sen, 1984). The value of forgiving would be an important aspect of empathy as well as for the supporting or activating the level of self-suffering needed in responding in a nonviolent way to a violent adversary.

Schwartz's (in press) conformity value domain is defined as the restraint of actions, inclinations, and impulses likely to upset or harm others and violate social expectations or norms. Values within this conformity domain include obedience,

self-discipline, politeness, and honoring parents and elders. This conformity value domain is consistent with the philosophy of nonviolent action because of the self-discipline and obedience values. The need to accept self-suffering and engage in restraint in responding in a nonviolent way to a violent adversary is easier defined and advocated than done. Self-discipline is definitely needed to avoid succumbing to the temptation of a violent response. Obedience is important but not the blind obedience to authority for authority's sake as in the Milgram experiments. In fact, individuals predisposed to nonviolent responses to conflict are less likely to hurt others in an experimental paradigm like Milgram's than are members of the general population. The obedience here is to truth and the "right course of action" within a conflict situation. This type of obedience is needed if nonviolent activists are to stay the course of action and follow the plan of their leaders and the precept of their creed.

Empirical Support for the Values/Nonviolence Linkage

Empirical data dealing with the characteristics of nonviolent activists is relatively scarce. However, there have been several noteworthy attempts to characterize and to better understand nonviolent and violent persons based on case studies (e.g. Erikson, 1969; Nakhre, 1982; Rappoport, 1990) and the application of psychological theory and principles (e.g. Bondurant, 1965; Pelton, 1974).

One barrier to research in on the topic of nonviolence has

been the identification of nonviolent individuals. The work of Kool and his colleagues (Kool and Keyes, 1990; Kool and Sen, 1984) has helped to alleviate this problem by developing a psychometric instrument, The Nonviolence Test (NVT), to identify individuals who are predisposed to nonviolent methods of conflict resolution. The NVT has been shown to be reliable and valid in differentiating individuals with a predisposition for nonviolence from those with a predisposition to violence in a variety of cross-national contexts.

Does the level of nonviolent predisposition to conflict situations as measured by the NVT for someone relate to the priorities placed on the universalism, benevolence, and conformity value domains? Mayton, Diessner & Granby (1992) investigated differences between individuals strongly predisposed to nonviolent methods of conflict resolution and those strongly predisposed to violent means of conflict resolution. These extreme groups did differ significantly on the three value domains. Data generated for their study will be presented to help answer the above question for the entire spectrum of predispositions toward nonviolent conflict resolution strategies.

METHOD

A total of 137 adolescents and college students from the rural Pacific Northwest completed The Nonviolence Test (Kool & Sen, 1984) and the Values Questionnaire (Schwartz, In press) during the fall of 1991 and the spring of 1992. The demographic characteristics of the sample are depicted in Table 2.

Instruments

The NVT (Kool and Sen, 1984) is a 65 item forced choice scale. Raw scores are obtained by omitting the 29 filler items and summing the number of nonviolent responses to the remaining 36 items. Scores can range from 0 to 36 with higher scores indicating stronger tendencies to use nonviolent strategies to solve conflict situations. The NVT has adequate test-retest reliability of .81 and alpha reliability of .82 (Kool & Sen, 1984). The NVT has also been demonstrated to be valid using known group and concurrent methods (Kool & Keyes, 1990; Kool & Sen, 1984).

The Values Questionnaire (Schwartz, In press) is a 56 item scale. Respondents indicate how important values are for them as a guiding principle in their lives, on a nine point scale. Subscores were obtained for the three universal motivational domains for values of concern to this study by averaging the responses to the individual values within the respective domain. Subscores could vary from -1 up to 7 with higher scores indicating a higher priority placed on the value domain.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The means and standard deviations for the respondents are presented in Table 3. The correlations between the NVT scores and the three value domains were statistically significant although not large. As predicted, the NVT was significantly correlated with the benevolence domain ($r = .31$, $p < .01$), the conformity domain ($r = .21$, $p < .05$), and the universalism domain ($r = .21$, $p < .05$).

The relationships are encouraging in the validation of the value interpretation of the philosophy of nonviolent action espoused in the teachings of Gandhi. Replications of this study with more varied samples is important to ascertain the robustness of these findings before strong generalizations are possible.

The strong psychometric characteristics of the NVT make it very suitable for a wide range of research including peace research concerning nonviolent activism and other areas, such as child and spouse abuse, where nonviolent conflict resolution is needed. The proposed value linkages to nonviolent activism also need to be investigated with more than a measure of predisposition to nonviolence. Future research needs to investigate value priorities for individuals who are engaging in various types of nonviolent activism.

As Boulding (1990) has pointed out, the role of organized nonviolence in achieving peace has not received the attention it deserves. Initiatives, like conferences focussing on nonviolence organized by Kool (1990), are one avenue to encourage more psychological research on nonviolent strategies of conflict resolution. Given changes in the world situation and the end of the cold war, one direction for peace research to take is in the area of nonviolence. With the current regional turmoil in Sarajevo, South Africa, the Middle East and elsewhere there is tremendous potential for nonviolent activism to be applied. Psychologists should attempt to study the value orientations and other characteristics of the participants in nonviolent action and the dynamics of the approaches they pursue for peace.

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Table 1
Universal Motivational Domains for Values (Schwartz, in press)

Motivational Domain	Definitional Phrases	Example of Values Within Each Domain
POWER	Social status and prestige, control or dominance over people and resources.	social power, wealth, authority, preserving public image
ACHIEVEMENT	Personal success through demonstrating competence according to social standards.	successful, capable, ambitious
HEDONISM	Pleasure or sensuous gratification for oneself.	pleasure, enjoying life
STIMULATION	Excitement, novelty, and challenge in life.	daring, a varied life, an exciting life
SELF-DIRECTION	Independent thought and action--choosing, creating, exploring.	creativity, freedom,curious, independent, choosing own goals
UNIVERSALISM	Understanding, appreciation, tolerance and protection for the welfare of all people and for nature.	social justice, broadminded, world at peace, wisdom, a world of beauty, unity with nature, protecting the environment, equality
BENEVOLENCE	Preservation and enhancement of the welfare of people with whom one is in frequent personal contact.	helpful, forgiving, honest, loyal
TRADITION	Respect, commitment and acceptance of the customs and ideas that traditional culture or religion impose on the self.	accepting my portion in life, devout, respect for tradition, humble, moderate
SECURITY	Safety, harmony and stability of society, of relationships, and of self.	family security, national security, social order, clean, reciprocation of favors, sense of belonging
CONFORMITY	Restraint of actions, inclinations, and impulses likely to upset or harm others and violate social expectations or norms.	obedient, self-discipline, politeness, honoring parents and elders

Table 2

Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Age	
Mean	19.92
Median	18.0
Standard Deviation	5.08
Range	16 - 49
Sex	
Female	69.9 %
Male	30.1 %
Ethnic Background	
White/Caucasian	94.8 %
Native American Indian	0.7 %
Asian American	2.2 %
Other	3.6 %

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics for Instruments

Instrument	Means	Standard Deviation
Value Domain		
Universalism	4.58	1.10
Benevolence	5.04	1.20
Conformity	4.47	1.25
Nonviolent Predisposition		
NVT Score	23.23	6.25